

Oregon Council of Presidents



Oregon State
University



Western Oregon
UNIVERSITY

To: Joint Ways & Means Education Subcommittee Members
From: Oregon Council of Presidents
Re: Continue Capital Investments in Public University Infrastructure
Date: November 19, 2019

The Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) recently issued a Strategic Capital Development Plan (Plan) that clearly demonstrates acute and increasing need for renovation, resiliency and ADA investments across all public university campuses. Beyond the important physical needs, the Plan highlights the critical student success gains associated with building modernization and the direct correlation between high-quality university facilities and workforce development.

The Plan identifies that “existing facilities have serious age, quality and suitability issues that compromise efficiency and effectiveness”. Conservative estimates from public universities show the deferred maintenance backlog across all campuses exceeds \$1 billion dollars. The top recommendation is to “focus on the improvement and renewal of the existing capital assets” and the Plan proposes, at a minimum, annual investments of \$152 million for maintenance and \$254 million for capital renewal.

The state is moving in the right direction and has made great progress. The legislature has increased its commitment to the preservation and modernization of aging buildings on public university campuses and institutions have substantially increased their commitment of external resources. In the 2017-19 session, over \$288 million in capital bonds, lottery bonds and General Funds were dedicated to capital construction and renovations across all seven universities. The universities matched this investment with over \$130 million in philanthropic gifts or partnerships.

The students, faculty and staff of Oregon’s universities are grateful for this commitment and, as supported by the HECC-commissioned report, believe that prioritizing this level of investment is essential to meeting Oregon’s higher education and workforce needs. **We look forward to working with the legislature during the 2020 session to continue capital funding at or above 2017-19 levels.** It is a shared responsibility and universities remain fully committed to leveraging other resources to maximize the impact of capital investments.

The benefits of investment in university facilities go far beyond those values identified in the Plan and the tangible enhancements on campuses. The projects themselves generate hundreds of living wage jobs, promote equity in the building trades through apprenticeships, and cultivate community engagement.

It is critical that we continue to reduce deferred maintenance, enhance efficiencies, mitigate safety hazards including those related to seismic needs that were not included in this plan, so we can improve access for students, staff and the public, while reducing future costs and cultivating academic spaces that improve student outcomes.



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